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The Sutra, A Prequisite For The Muslim Performing Fard Salat

SUTRA:

A sutra is an obligatory object used by a Muslim performing fard Salat as a barrier between their place of prostration and anything which might pass in front of this area. The evidence supporting the requirement of a sutra for fard salat is a hadith in the collection of Ahmad wherein Abu Hurairah related that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: **"When one of you prays, he should place something in front of him..."**

The Sutra of the one who performs salat:

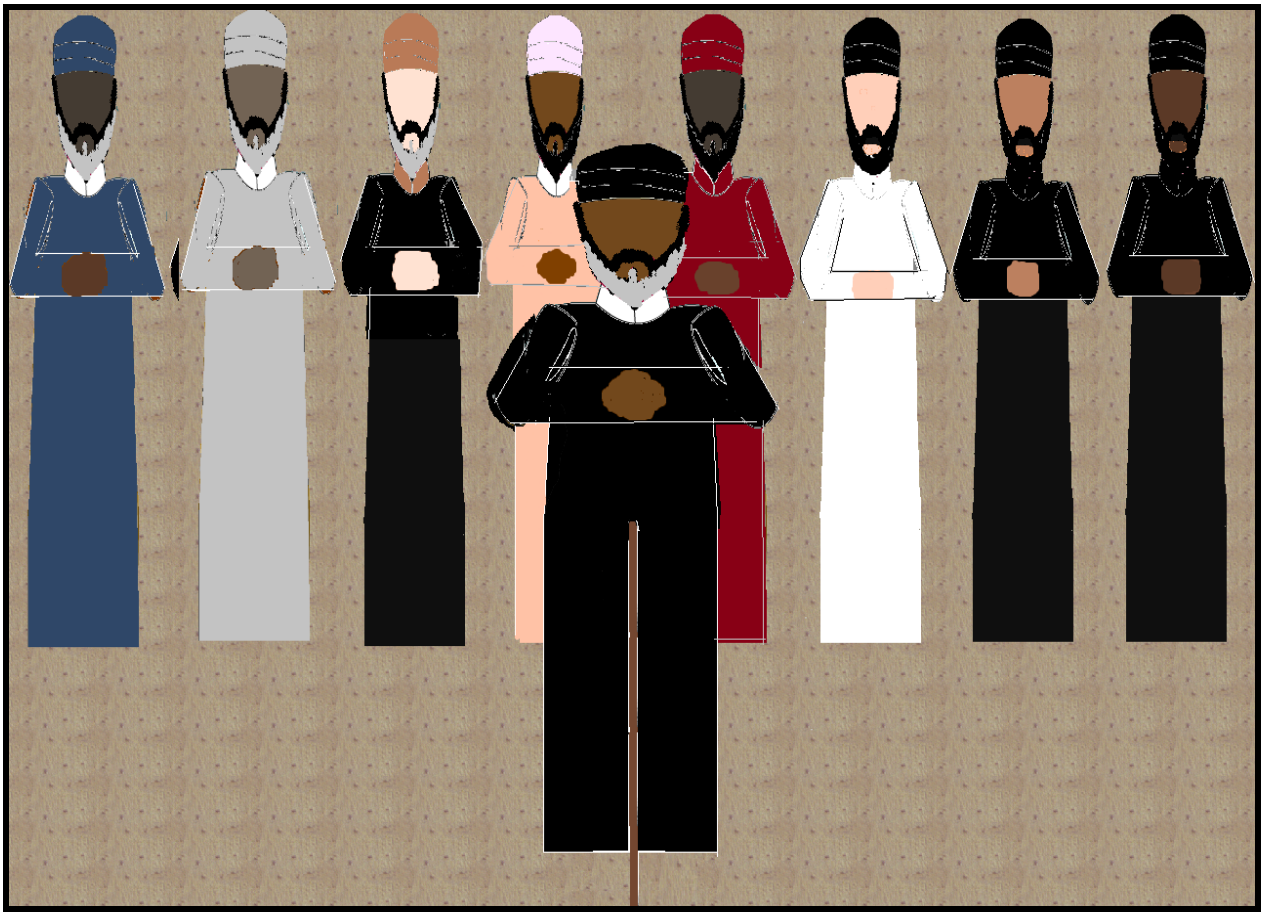
A hadith in the collection of Abu Dawud narrated by Abū Sa'īd Al-Khudrī reports: **"Allāh's Messenger (P.B.U.H.) said, 'When you do your Salāt, do it towards a Sutrah and come close to it. And never let any one pass between you and your Sutra, even if you have to fight him for the Devil is with him.'"**

The objects one can use as a sutra could be equal to the size of a camel's saddle (about 12 inches high - give or take a few inches):

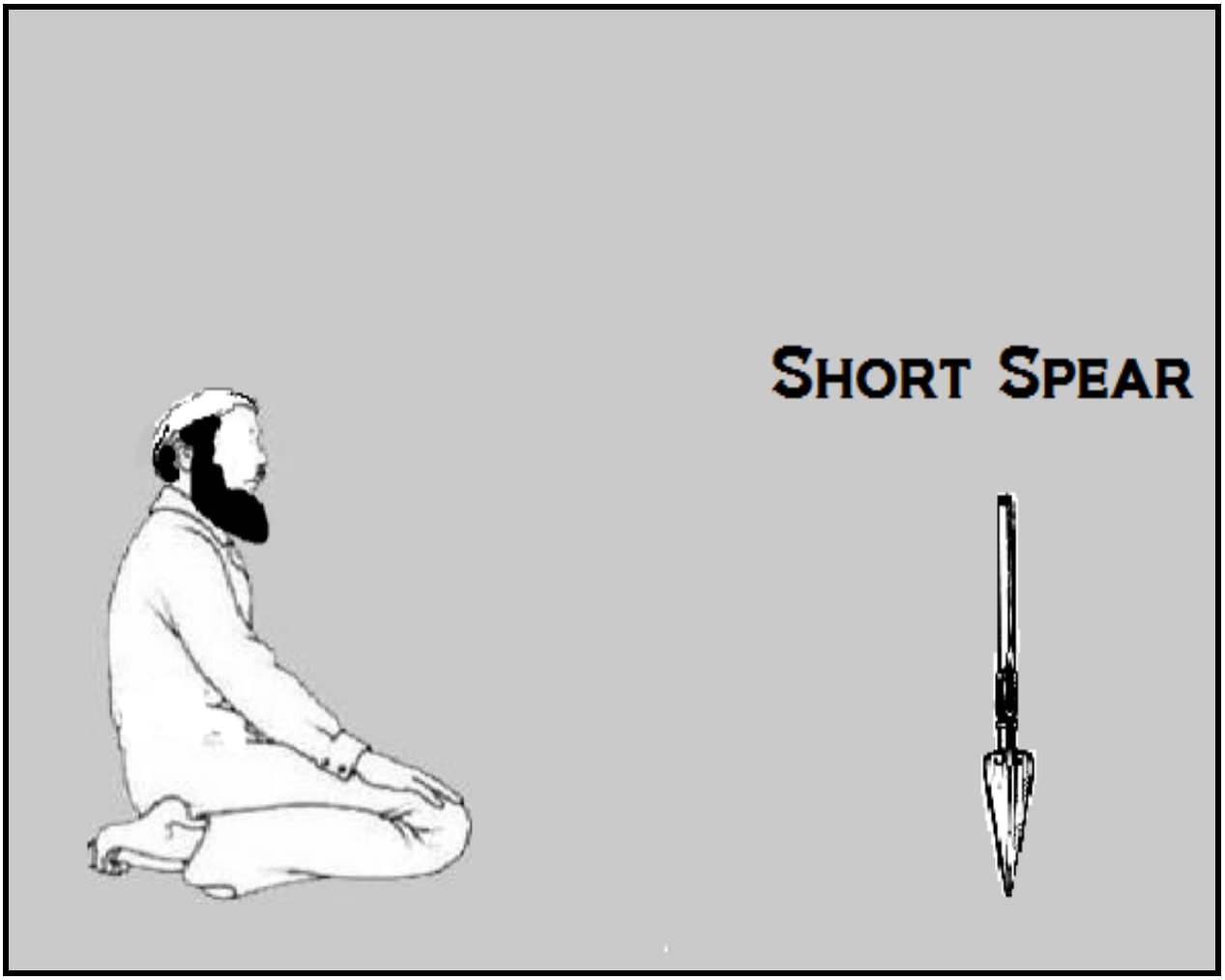
The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Imam Muslim wherein Musa b. Talha reported on the authority of his father: "**We used to say prayer and the animals moved in front of us. We mentioned it to the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) and he said: 'If anything equal to the back of a saddle is in front of you, then what walks in front, no harm would come to him. Ibn Numair said: No harm would come whosoever walks in front.'**"

The Imam, the Imam's sutra, or the row of Muslims performing congregational salat in front of an individual is sufficient as a sutra:

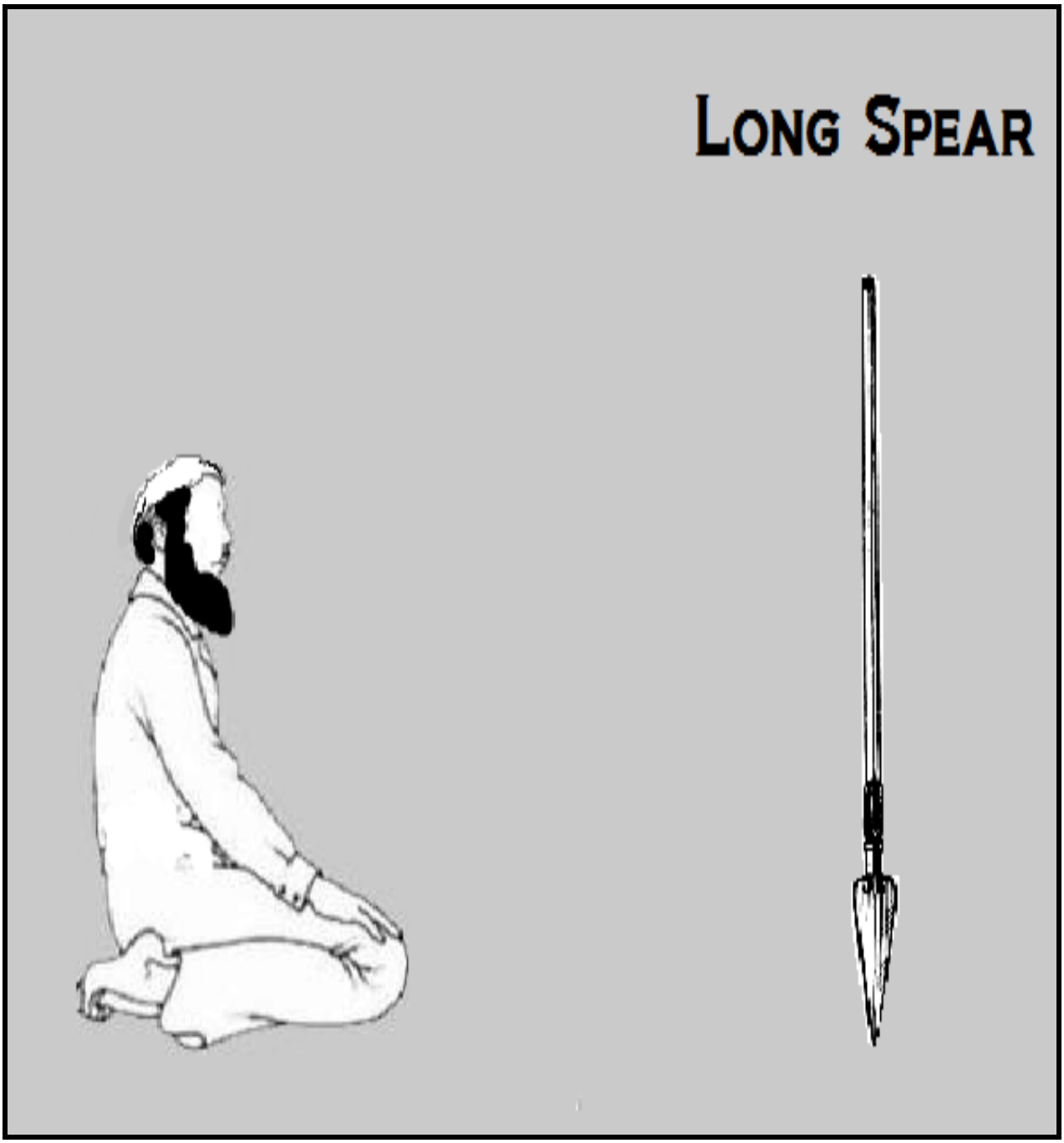
The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Imam Muslim wherein Ibn Umar reported: "**When the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) went out on the 'Id day, he ordered to carry a spear-and it was fixed in front of him (sutra for the Imam), and he said prayer towards its (direction), and the people were behind him (he served as their sutra). And he did it in the journey, and that is the reason why the Amirs carried it.**"



A spear (short or long) is sufficient for a sutra:

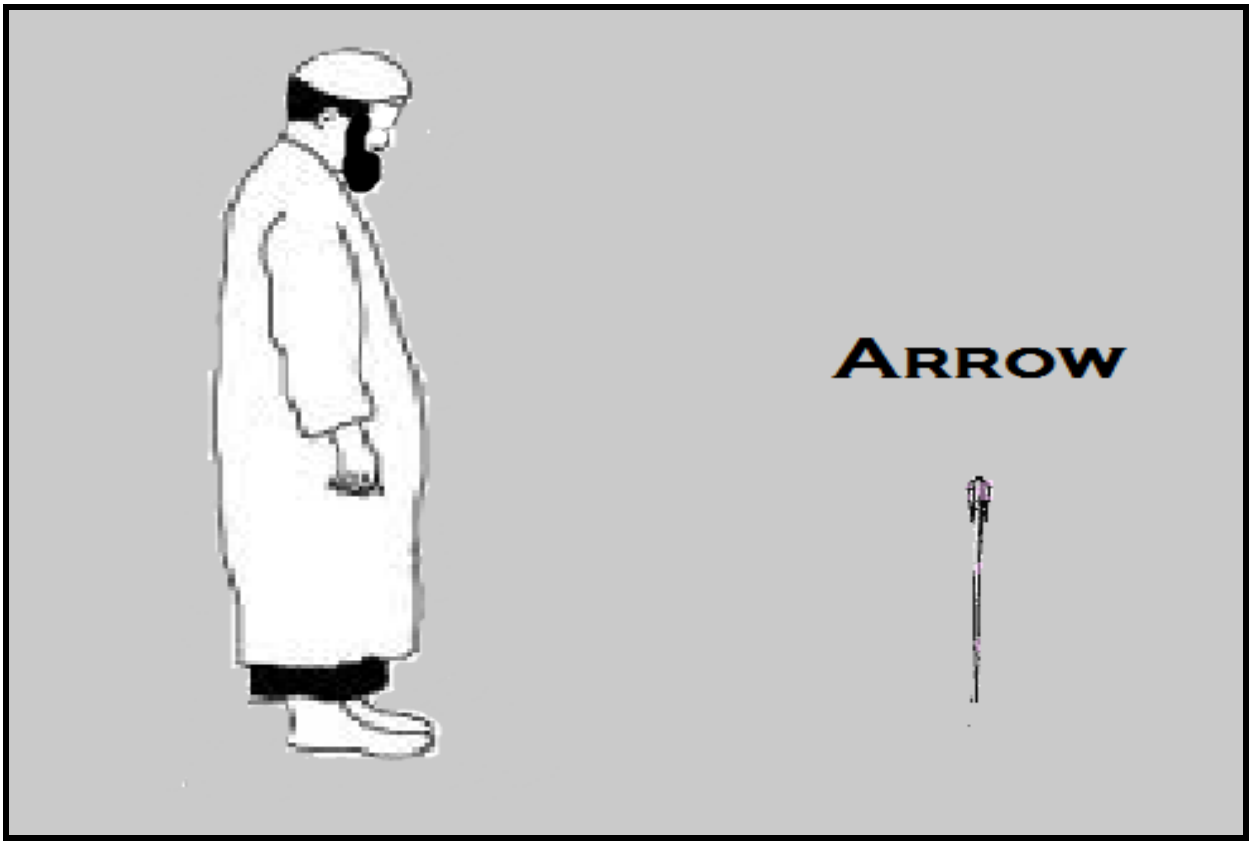


The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Bukhari wherein it is related from 'Awn ibn Abi Juhayfa who reportedly said: "**I heard my father say, 'The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) came out to us at midday and was brought wudu' water and did wudu'. Then he led us in the Dhuhr and 'Asr prayers with a short spear in set up front of him. Women and donkeys were passing behind it.'**"



The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Bukhari wherein It is related from 'Abdullah: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) used to have a spear set up for him and would pray facing it**."

The use of an arrow as a sutra:



The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Ahmad wherein It is related from Sabrah ibn Mu'abid who reported: "**The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) reportedly said: 'When one of you prays, he should make a partition for his salah, even if it is an arrow.'**"

The use of a bed as a sutra:

The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Bukhari wherein it is related from Aiesha: "**...The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) would come and pray facing the middle of the bed....**"

The use of a pillar as a sutra:

The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Bukhari wherein it is related from 'Umar who said: **"Those who are praying are more entitled to the pillars than those conversing." 'Umar saw a man praying between two pillars and moved him up to a pillar and said, "Pray towards it."**

Furthermore, it is related in another hadith collected by Bukhari that Yazid ibn 'Ubayd said: "**I used to come with Salama ibn al-Akwa' and he would pray behind the pillar where the Qur'an was kept. I said, 'Abu Muslim, I see that you are keen to pray by this pillar.' He said, 'I saw that the Prophet(P.B.U.H.) was keen to pray there**.'"

The use of a camel as a sutra:

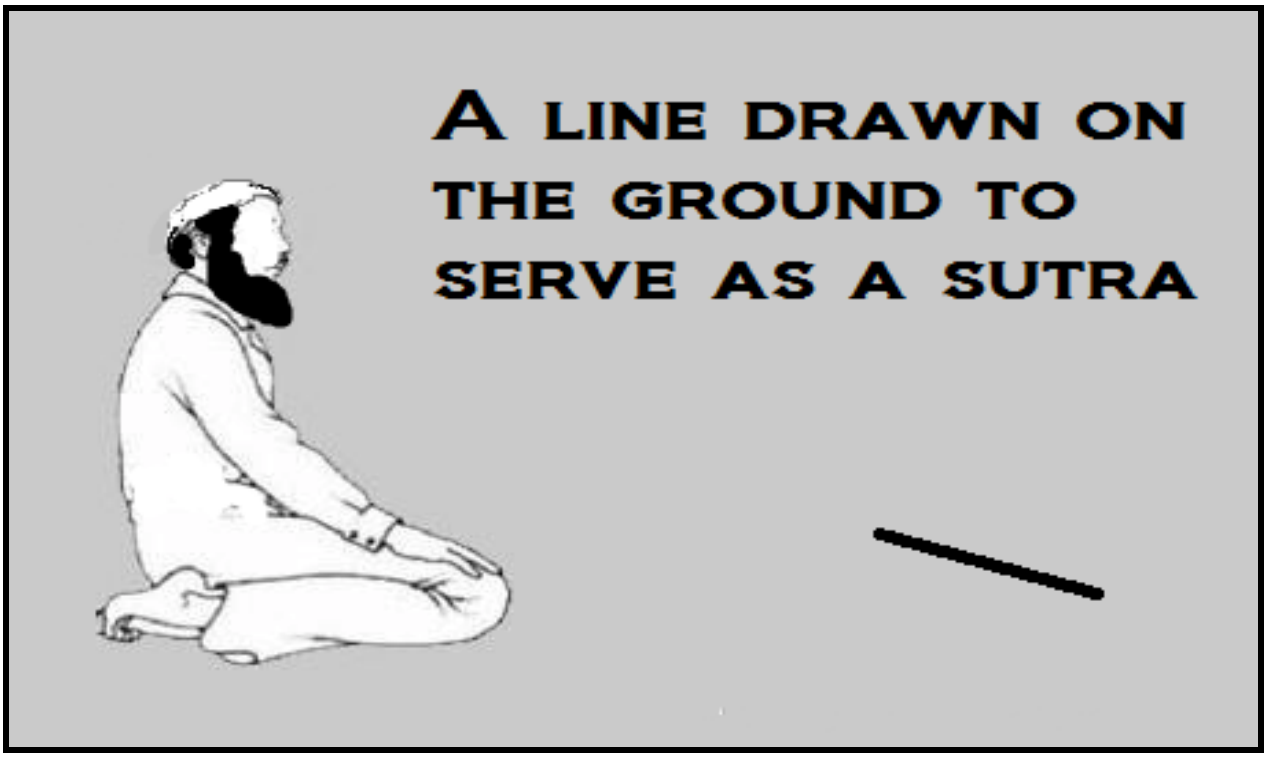
The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Bukhari wherein it is related from Nafi: "**I saw Ibn 'Umar praying while taking his camel as a Sutra in front of him and he said, 'I saw the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) doing the same**.'"

The use of a bed as a sutra with someone asleep atop of it (even if they are menstruating):

The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Bukhari wherein it is related from 'A'isha who reportedly said: "**Do you equate us with dogs and donkeys? I once found myself lying on the bed when the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) came and faced the middle of the bed and started praying. I disliked being in front of him, so I eased myself down towards the foot of the bed until I had slipped out from under my bedcover.**"

Furthermore, in a hadith collected by Bukhari it is related that Maymuna reportedly said: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) used to pray with me sleeping beside him. When he prostrated, his garment touched me and I was menstruating**."

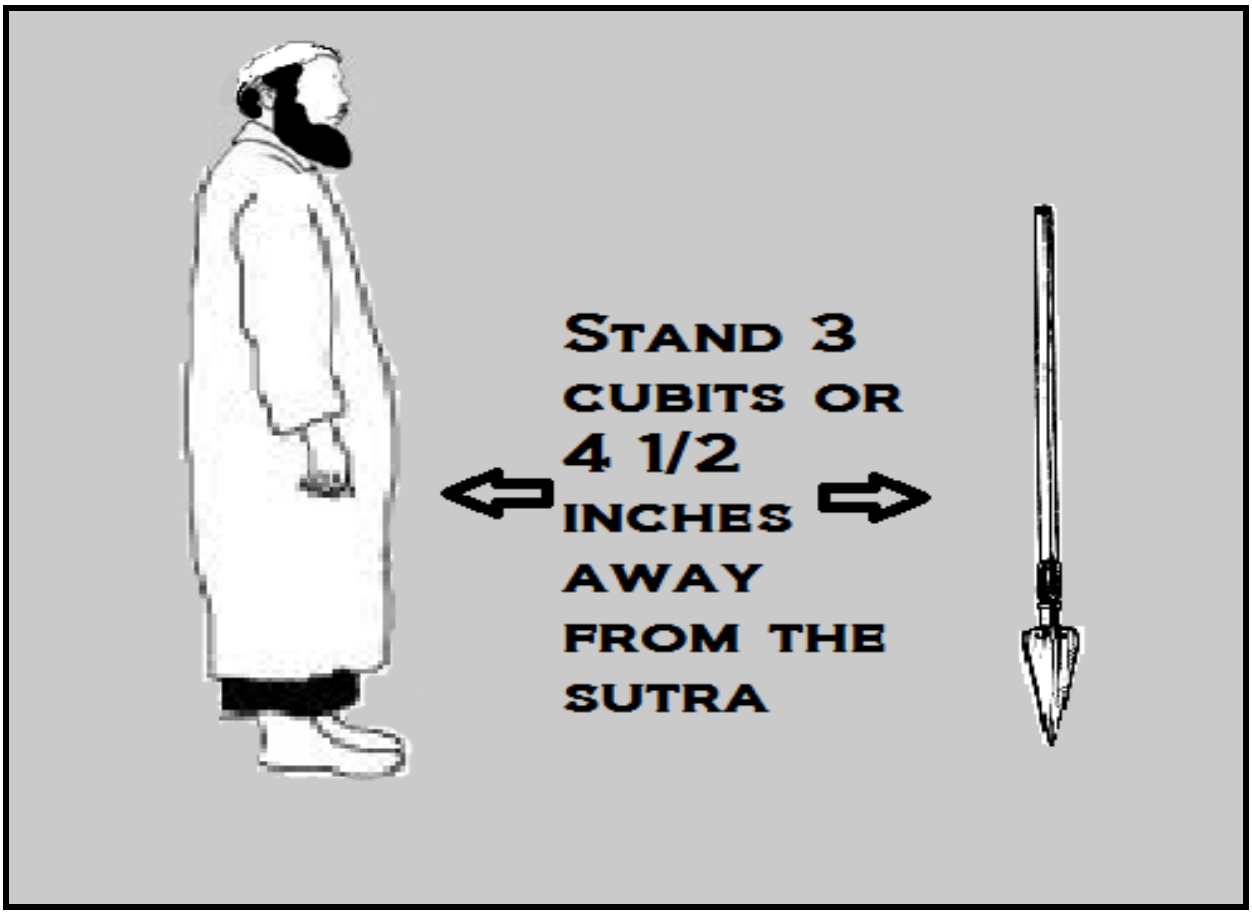
The use of a line on the ground as a sutra:



The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Abu Dawud wherein Abu Hurairah related that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: "**When one of you prays, he should place something in front of him. If he cannot find anything, he should prop up his staff (in front of him). If he does not have a staff, he should draw a line (on the ground in front of him), then nothing that passes in front of him will harm him**."

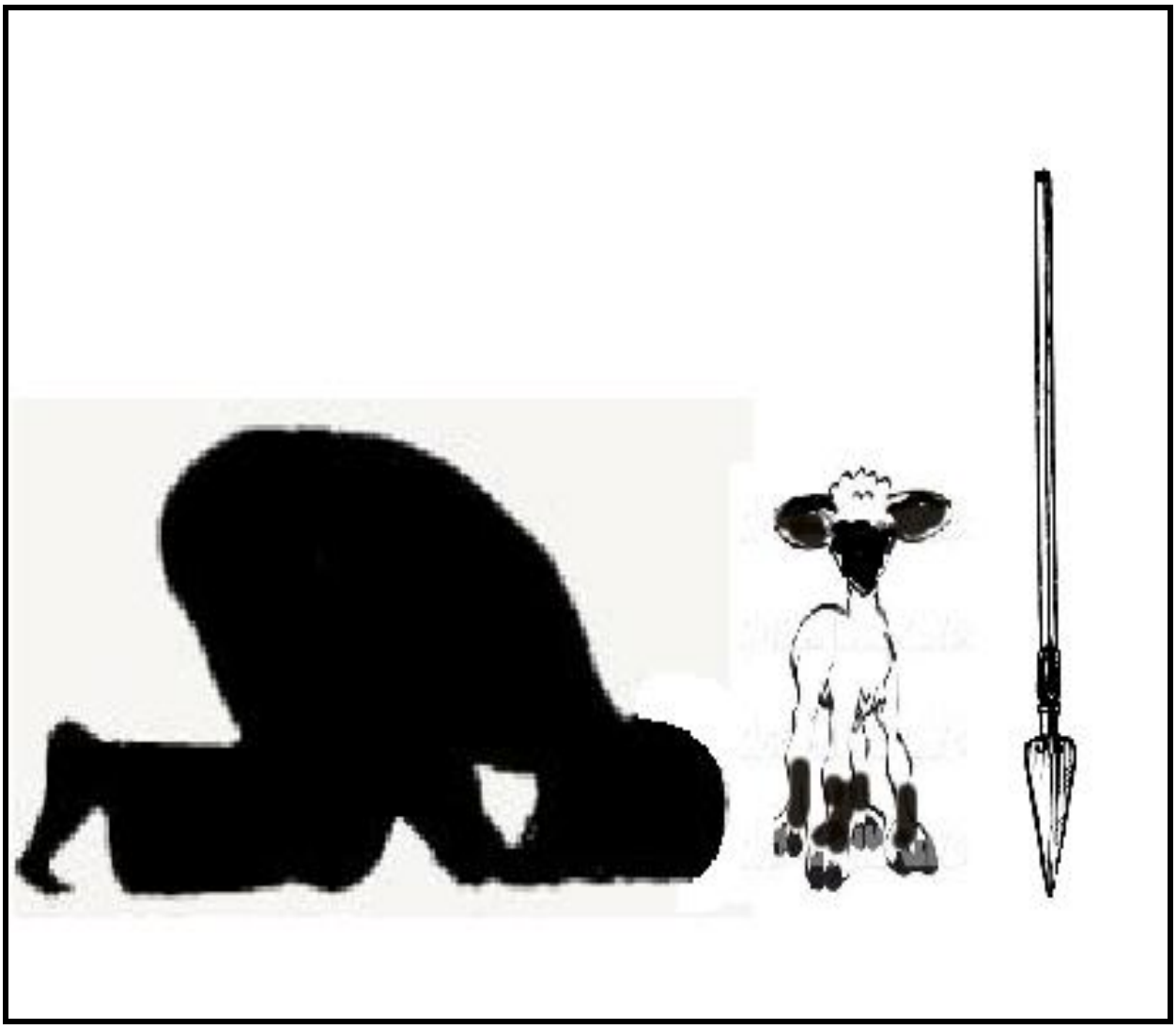
The preferred distance between the person intending to perform salat and their sutra:

The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Bukhari wherein it is related from Nafi': "**Whenever 'Abdullah entered the Kaaba, he would walk straight ahead with the door directly behind him. He walked on until there was about three cubits (54 inches or 4 1/2 feet) between him and the wall in front of him where he prayed, seeking the place where Bilal told him that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) had prayed. He said, 'There is no harm in anyone praying in any part of the House he likes.'**"

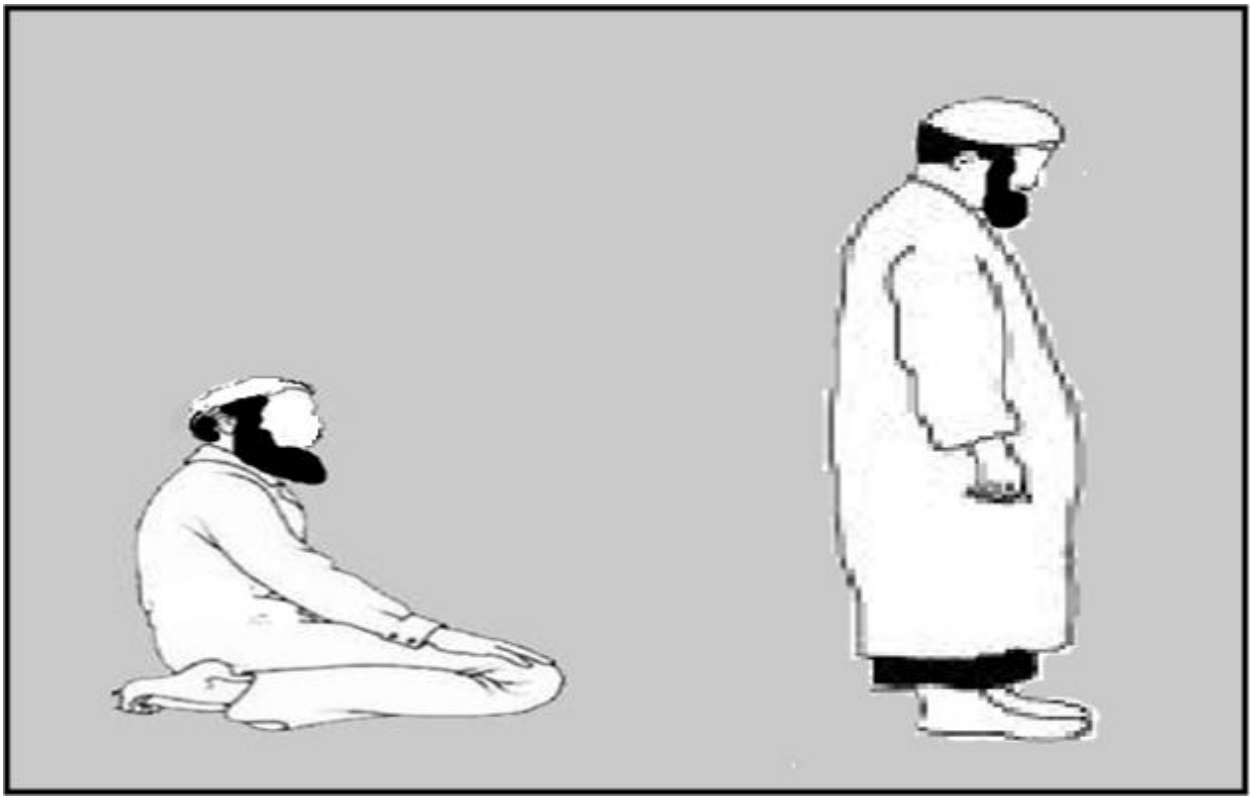


The distance the sutra should be from the place of prostration (where the forehead of the person performing salat comes into contact with the ground surface):

It is related in a hadith collected by Bukhari wherein Sahl reportedly said: "**Between the place where the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) prayed and the wall (sutra), there was room for a sheep to walk past** (about 18 - 24 inches)."



The adequate distance one should stand away from another's sutra in a Masjid, and the etiquette of one intending to make sunnah (voluntary/supererogatory) salat to find a location wherein others will not violate their sutra by walking in front of them:



The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Bukhari wherein 'Uthman reportedly said: "**I disliked facing another man when he was praying if that distracted him. However, if he is not distracted by it, Zayd ibn Thabit said, 'It does not matter. The man does not invalidate the other man's prayer.'**"